

CLAIMS

1/ An aircraft of the airplane or glider type,
characterized in that it includes propulsion means (2)
enabling said aircraft (1) to maintain itself, to move
5 itself, and to orient itself solely at high altitude.

2/ An aircraft of the airplane or glider type according
to claim 1, characterized in that said propulsion means
(2) comprise at least one plasma thruster which operates
10 using plasma created from the surrounding air at said
high altitude.

3/ An aircraft of the airplane or glider type according
to claim 1 or claim 2, characterized in that it includes
15 at least one solar generator (5) cooled by convection
with the surrounding air at said high altitude.

4/ An aircraft of the airplane or glider type according
to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that it
20 includes at least one storage battery (7) having
superconductive components.

5/ A method of getting an aircraft of the airplane or
glider type as specified in any one of claims 1 to 4 onto
25 station, the method being characterized by the following
steps:

- on the ground, said aircraft (1) is secured to an
independent transporter (3);
- said transporter (3) takes said aircraft (1) to a
30 high altitude at which it is to operate making use solely
of propulsion means of said transporter (3);
- said transporter (3) releases said aircraft (1) at
the altitude (H) and at least approximately at the
intended location of its operating station; and
- 35 - if necessary, said aircraft (1) uses its own
propulsion means (2) to put itself finally on station and
take up its proper orientation.

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6/ A method according to claim 5, characterized in that said transporter (3) comprises at least one balloon (3) suitable for rising to high altitude.

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7/ A method of replacing a radio relay in a telecommunications network comprising a plurality of radio relays, the method being characterized in that said radio relay (10) is replaced by an aircraft (1) of the airplane or glider type as specified in any one of claims 1 to 4, and provided with transceiver means (15) for radio waves (16, 17), said aircraft (1) being taken to an altitude and a position such that said transceiver means (15) lies in the same direction relative to at least one user (11, 12) of said telecommunications network (RT) as said replaced relay (10), with operation between said transceiver means (15) and said user (11, 12) being performed via an existing interface.

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8/ A telecommunications network comprising a plurality of radio relays, characterized in that it includes at least one radio relay carried by an aircraft (1) of the airplane or glider type as specified in any one of claims 1 to 4, and put onto station at high altitude.

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